

## **Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the Application.

## **Listing of Claims**

1. (Currently Amended) An ankle brace comprising:

a rigid U-shaped member sized to fit under a foot, ~~and extending up along the rigid U-shaped member having medial and lateral elements for extending along medial and lateral sides of a leg to support the inner and outer surfaces~~ of an ankle and leg of an individual;

inner and outer layers surrounding the rigid member and forming a body having a foot portion with a forward edge defining a toe aperture, and a ~~foot-bed~~ footbed, and a leg portion with an upper edge, and rear edges extending from the upper edge to the footbed, the body having side areas adjacent the medial and lateral elements of the U-shaped member and, a flexible front area; and

a fastening strap connectable about the body to retain the brace on the foot, ankle and leg of an individual.

2. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the footbed is sized to extend from the ball of the foot to the heel portion of a foot.

3. (Currently Amended) The ankle brace of claim 1 further comprising

a flexible heel portion that extends rearward of the intersection of the rear edges of the leg portion and the footbed.

4. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 3 wherein the flexible heel portion comprises inner and outer layers and a cushion layer therebetween.

5. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 4 wherein the cushion layer comprises foam.

6. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 further comprising a leg cover attached adjacent to a rear edge of the body for protecting the leg from the fastening strap.

7. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 further comprising a cushion layer between the inner layer and the rigid member.

8. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 7 wherein the cushion layer comprises foam.

9. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the fastening strap is secured about the body by a hook and loop fastening system.

10. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the inner and outer layers of the body comprise leather.

11. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 1 wherein the rigid member comprises plastic.

12. (Currently Amended) An ankle brace comprising:

a foot engaging portion for receiving a foot in the form of a foot cover including a footbed, a forward edge, and a flexible heel;

a leg engaging portion extending from the foot engaging portion, the leg engaging portion in the form of a leg cover including a top edge and rear edges extending from the top edge towards the footbed defining an opening;

the flexible heel extending rearward of the intersection of the rear edges of the leg cover and the footbed;

a rigid support member in the footbed and extending from proximate the forward edge to the flexible heel, the rigid member further extending up the leg engaging portion for positioning along the medial and lateral sides of a leg to support the inner and outer surfaces of the ankle and lower leg of an individual; and

means for retaining the rear edges of the leg engaging portion in proximity to secure the ankle brace about the foot, ankle and lower leg of an individual.

13. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the foot engaging portion and the leg engaging portion comprise a soft durable material which encases the rigid member.

14. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 13 wherein the soft durable material comprises an inner layer which lines the interior surface of the foot engaging

portion and the leg engaging portion, and an outer layer which covers the exterior surface of the foot engaging portion and the leg engaging portion.

15. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 further comprising a cushion layer between the inner layer and the rigid member.

16. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 15 wherein the cushion layer comprises foam.

17. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the flexible heel portion comprises inner and outer layers of soft durable material and a cushion layer therebetween.

18. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the means for retaining the rear edges in proximity comprises an adjustable strap.

19. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 18 wherein the strap secures the brace to a leg by a hook and loop fastening system.

20. (Original) An ankle brace comprising:

inner and outer layers forming a boot-shaped body having an open toe, an open back and a flexible heel; and

a U-shaped support member positioned between the inner and outer layers which extends along the bottom of a foot from the ball of the foot to the front of the flexible heel and up the sides of the boot-shaped body to support the inner and

outer surfaces of the ankle and lower leg of an individual, wherein when positioned on a person, the flexible heel is positioned under a heel of a person's foot.

21. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 20 further comprising a means for securing the brace to the leg.

22. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 21 wherein the means for securing the brace to the leg comprises an adjustable strap.

23. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 20 further comprising a cushion layer between the inner layer and the support member.

24. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 23 wherein the cushion layer comprises foam.

25. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 20 further comprising a flexible heel portion having inner and outer layers and a cushion layer therebetween.

26. (Original) The ankle brace of claim 20 wherein the inner and outer layers comprise leather.

27. (Withdrawn) A method for treating an ankle injury comprising:  
  
custom forming a rigid member for an individual;  
  
incorporating the rigid member in a body having inner and outer layers;

inserting a foot, toes first, between rear edges of a leg portion;

inserting toes through a toe aperture in a foot portion;

securing the body to the foot and leg; and

wearing the ankle brace on the leg for a sufficient time to treat the injury.

28. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27 further comprising allowing a heel portion to flex to facilitate walking.

29. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27 wherein the step of securing the ankle brace to a foot and leg comprises wrapping an adjustable strap about the brace and leg.

30. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 29 further comprising wrapping a leg cover about the leg under the strap.

31. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 27 further comprising custom molding the rigid member to an individual's foot, ankle and leg prior to providing the ankle brace to an individual.

32. (New) The ankle brace of claim 12 wherein the leg engaging portion comprises a flexible forward portion.